The SJ CSRA CC now meets at the MieStelle Bakery on the first Thursday

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V .P. Garry Naples
Sec. Jim Mullaney
Treas. Chuck Goergen
Sgt. in Arms: Jim Sproull

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Volume 25, No. 2 | **the Stephen James CSRA Coin Club, Founded in 2001 Monthly Newsletter** | **January, 2026**

The Challenge of Collecting Complete U.S. Coin Type Sets, No. 2

2026 Club Meeting Schedule

Jan. 8	Apr. 2	July 2	Oct. 1
Feb. 5	May 7	Aug. 6	Nov. 5
Mar. 5	June 4	Sept. 3	**Dec. 3**

Collecting the First U.S. 5 cent Nickel set

An 1866 Shield nickel with Rays grading MS-64 by PCGS
(Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

In order to get more useable coinage into circulation after the Civil War, Congress passed laws allowing for the striking of the two-cent piece in copper in 1864, the three cent piece in copper-nickel which was 75% copper and 25% nickel in 1865 and the 5 cent nickel piece which was also 75% copper and 25% nickel in 1866.

In 1866, our Chief Engraver was still James B. Longacre who served almost a quarter of a century as our Chief Engraver from 1844 thru mid 1869. As a result, Longacre created more U.S. coin types than any other chief Engraver before him or since but somehow until recently has always seemed to be slightly faded out when it comes to important artistic engravers.

As it turned out the first five years the Shield nickel was struck in the millions with the exception of the 1871 when just 561,000 were produced, millions continued to be produced through 1876. By then 1877 and '78 a lot of our silver coinage had returned so in 1877 and '78, only proofs Shield nickels were coined. After 1878, the Shield nickel was resumed but in smaller numbers until 1882 and lastly in 1883 when more than a million were struck but by then, both Longacre and his successor, William Barber had passed away with his son, Charles Barber his replacement and by 1880, plans were already being made to end the series.

Some years ago, one of the numismatic goals this collector considered was completing a series of all three of these denominations which over time he was actually able to accomplish.

An 1867 Shield nickel with rays graded MS-63 by PCGS
(Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

James Barton Longacre had a difficult period as our four Chief Engraver following the early death of Christian Gobrecht in 1844. He nevertheless went on to create the most U.S. coin types of any U.S. engraver before or since. During and shortly after the Civil War our regular silver coinage was virtually unavailable due to the hording and melting by civilians, so the United States government created small paper money called Fractional Currency that featured small size bills at first from 3 cents to 50 cents then from 5 cents thru 50cents. The public was not very pleased with these and shortly after they were released Joseph Wharton who specialized in the use of nickel recommended that the government should consider striking lower value coins in nickel. As a result, in 1865, the 3 cent nickel--a coin the size as a dime--was first released and in 1866, our first five cent nickels were first released to the e enjoyment of the public. Longacre created the design types of both but the nickel at first became the most popular because of the Shield design on the obverse and the circular 13 stars s surrounding the numerals 5 on the reverse.

Unfortunately the Philadelphia mint had difficulty striking the reverse due to the rays so later in 1867, they were removed.

An 1867 Shield nickel without rays graded MS-63 by PCGS
(Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

The coin would now be struck in this manner for 19 years in thru early 1883 before being retired. The writer interested in completing type sets, set out to do just that but it took a long while and some of the photos you a re about to see on the following page were acquired from 1881 thru 2021 a span of forty years.

(Continued on page 2, column 1)

Collecting the First U.S. 5 cent Nickel set

(Continued from page 1, column 2)

An 1868 Shield Nickel graded MS-63 by PCGS

(Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

In 1868, the Philadelphia Mint struck 28,817,000 Shield nickels, the second most largest total after the 1867 *without rays* shown on the bottom of page 1, column 2. After that, the amount began to drop gradually with 16,395,000 in 1869 and 4,806,000 in 1870.

d

An 1871 Shield nickel graded AU-58 by NGC

[Enlarge the page to fill the monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

In 1871, the volume of Shield nickels struck that year dropped considerably down to 561,000 with the result that the prices for collectors wishing to acquire this date are much higher.

An 1872 Shield Nickel graded MS-62 by NGC

In the following year,1872, the mintage rose to 6,036,000 and the price dropped accordingly as a common date once again.

In 1873 there were two date types, the first with closed 3 which looked like an 8 shown directly above followed later in the year with the open 3 in the date which looked like a 3 shown directly be blow.

An 1873 Shield Nickel with an Open 3 in the date, mintage, 4113,950

An 1876 Shield nickel, later graded MS-63 by NGC

Between 1874 and 1876 the amount each year turned back to the multi-millions although still much less than the 1872 and 1873 with the Open 3 with just 2,530,000 struck in 1876 with 2,530,000 struck in 1876

By 1877, the financial industry had become more normalized once again with almost too much regular silver coinage having been returned into circulation and the Shield nickel was becoming less involved despite its large yearly amounts so no Shield nickels were struck for commerce in either 1877 or 1878. Instead the Shield nickel was produced only as proofs in both those years with only 900 proofs struck in 1877 and 2,350 in 1878, presumably for collectors.

An 1878 Proof Shield nickel graded Proof-63 by PCGS

Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

When the writer was attending the Augusta coin club show in November 2023 he was pleasantly surprised to see an 1878 Proof Shield nickel in one of the dealer's cases. The price was fairly strong but affordable considering that had it been the 1877 proof only Shield nickel, he might not have been able to afford it. There's an old saying that "Beggars can't be choosers" so when you come a cross a scarce to rare coin at a major show, you acquire it with the money you've saved. The writer may never be able to acquire the 1877 Proof Shield nickel because it is both extremely rare and expensive but he was delighted to come across this one.

An 1879 Shield Nickel graded MS-61 by NGC

Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

The author came across the **1879 Shield Nickel 110 years after it was released away back in June 1989** at a major New Jersey coin Show. It cost him $450. Years later he sent the coin out to NGC for grading at it came back certified MS-61, a low-end Uncirculated coin but nevertheless more valuable than he thought it would be when he first acquired it. The reported mintage was only 25,900 and apparently, it circulated. Based on the value the coin today, the price the author paid for the coin was a pittance. If the reader can enlarge the page to 150% you will see a fairly attractive nickel coin of the period.

(Continued on page 3, column 1)

Collecting the First U.S. 5 cent Nickel set

(Continued from page 2, column 2)

Directly below are two coins the writer no longer recalls owning because he believes that he obtained them multi decades ago and the examples of the two dates he has of them now are graded higher and look much sharper. Nevertheless, these oldies a re worth chirpy a bout a little if not a lot.

An 1879 Shield nickel graded only AU-50

[Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

After 1878 when the minting of regular nickels was once again being struck for use, only 25,900 were actually coined which at the time apparently the mint ma y have thought not too many citizens needed because m any of the previous dates were still flooding commerce. As a result, the coin is somewhat scarce for today's collectors with a most recent sale of an AU-50 example sold at an auction back in 2017 cost the winning bidder $1,100. The writer has a wholly different example today which h is sharper than the coin shone above and was certified MS-61 by NGC. It is in the bank but appears much sharper than the example shown above.

An 1880 Shield Nickel graded MS-60 that was played with

[Enlarge the page to fill monitor screen or 150% to better view the coin.]

When the author first began working on this column he had to use an early photo taken of the rare 1800 Shield nickel that he had a acquired long before some of the Shield nickels he has now. The truth of the matter is that at the time he bought the 1880 Shields nickel he did not realize its value which is enormous today. Apparently at the time he acquired the coin at a small shop in New York City, it appears that neither did the dealer. Today it is worth $13,500 according to PCGS COINFACTS but alas, the writer doesn't have it anymore. On the computer screen, it looks fine, but the coin was slightly damaged which the seller probably knew fairly well and the buyer didn't since he was not yet aware that he was acquiring a toyed with coin. Years later he sold it and replaced it with a highly attractive proof example that has far more eye appeal;; (alas, not shown!).

An 1881 Shield Nickel graded MS-63

This is a nice example of the 1881 Shield nickel that had a mintage of 68,800 pieces which while not as rare as the 1880 regular strike it is also somewhat higher priced than the earlier dates as well.

An 1882 Shield nickel graded AU-58

In 1882, there were 11,472,900 Shield nickels struck at the Philadelphia Mint, the most in a single years since 1869 when 16,036,000 were coined, s o the coin is les s expensive than any of the preceding dates in the set according to the latest 2026 Red Book. An example graded AU-58 currently retails for just $200 with a recent winning bid at Stacks/ Bowers auction held in April 2025 selling for just $168.00.

An 1883/2 Shield Nickel graded MS-62

There were numerous die varieties of the 1883'2.
It is estimated that 118,975 coins were struck with the overdate.

An 1883 Shield nickel graded MS-63

By 1883, it was time to say "Good Bye" to the Shield nickel type but thee were at least three major varieties' that the writer was worth acquiring . These were the normal strike as shone directly above and the 1883/2 shown directly above. The regular issue of the coin had a mintage of 1,451,500 and while it is far lower than the previous date, it nevertheless is considered quite common for today's collectors to acquire.

In 1883 it was time to say farewell while our 6th Charles Barber, our sixth engraver later in the year replaced the Shield with the Liberty head type.

Difficulties in Preparing the Above Article

While preparing this article, the writer used film taken as far back as the last decade of the 20th century. When he and his wife, Vilma arrived in the CSRA **(for Central Savannah River Area)** in early December 2000 most of his copper Large Cents, half-cents and Shield nickels were already a part his collection. Third party grading had not yet arrived on the numismatic scene until the late 1980s and a lot of serious collectors were not ready to take their coins out of their tiny cardboard see-thru holders to have them buried in heavy plastic holders that were three times larger.

Numismatic times changed drastically shortly after the writer arrived in north eastern Georgia and by 2012, virtually every coin the writer acquired was in a certified holder except the earlier half-cents, large cents along with most of the Shield nickels collection. Usually, he tried to take a photo of each new acquisition after he obtained it but sometimes he simply put them in the bank and unfortunately forgot about them for a while until he decided to use them in an article.

Just before he started to prepare the February 2026 newsletter for the SJ CSRA CC club his Photo system died. He had intended to insert the better quality certified Shield nickels that had replaced the original ones which had included the rare 1880 and 1881 Shield nickels, both of which were now proofs instead of business strikes . As a result he was forced to use all of the earlier photos, most of which he still saved because the original coins were problem-free except for the original 1880 and 1881 Shield Nichols which turned out to have been be played with forcing him to sell them later on while replacing them with the proof, types not shown due to the broken photo system. ***Se la vis***.

STEPHEN JAMES CSRA COIN CLUB
Regular Meeting Thursday, January 8, 2026

President Kelly Nordeen called the regular meeting of the coin club to order at 6:48 p.m. in the Oh MieStelle Bakery on Pine Log Road. There were 15 members and 2 visitors attending in person, and 2 members viewing online.

Kelsey Forde won the door prize, a quarter-ounce silver Britannia.

Jim Sproull announced upcoming coin shows in the region.

JJ Engel made a motion which Sharon Smoot seconded to dispense with the reading of the Minutes of the previous meeting. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of the November Meeting Minutes will be on file with the other club records and the Minutes are also reported in the Club newsletter.

Chuck Goergen reported that the club's treasury had a balance of $2679.

Old Business:

Steve Kuhl reported on our club's upcoming show on March 7th . He requested that anyone going to other shows in the region to please help us advertise our upcoming show by taking flyers and business cards to put on information tables at those other shows.

New Business:

The club's January meeting will be held on January 8th, shifted a week to avoid New Year's Day.

Steve Kuhl requested that anyone that is developing a future program for our club please send an email to the club address (sjcsracoinclub@gmail.com), so we can plan future meetings.

The Program:

Jim Mullaney presented a program on counterstruck coins. The program focused on two examples of coins where a government directed that the coins of a foreign country be counterstruck by its own motto authorize them for commerce in the second country. Counterstriking another countries coins appears to have started soon after the very first coins were minted. Initially this was typically done with a fairly simple punch onto one face of a coin that caused the design on the other face of the coin to be flattened. But more elaborate methods developed, and by the mid 19th century complete coin designs of both sides of a small-diameter coin were being struck onto larger diameter host coins.

Jim's earlier example of counterstruck coins occurred several times in Great Britain immediately prior to and after the year 1800. Due to wars with France and Spain as well as other economic factors, the Bank of England had a cash crisis, and insufficient British coins were in its vault to keep up with public demand during a run on the bank. To resolve this crisis quickly, the government directed that Spanish dollars held by the bank be sent to the mint where they would be counter-marked with a puncheon of the king's head. The punch for the king's head was routinely used at that time to show that applicable taxes had been paid for silver plate. Nearly three million Spanish dollars were marked in this manner for circulation within Great Britain and they were valued at 4 shilling 9 pence to be temporarily integrated into the British coinage system.

A later coin Jim had as an example of a counterstrike was an 1894 Guatemalan peso. To solve a local coin shortage, Guatemala authorized foreign silver coins the size of an 8-reales (Spanish dollar) to best struck using the dies of a Guatemalan ½ Real (about the size of a half-dime). Striking the larger coin between the pair of dies resulted in both the obverse & reverse of the ½ Real being sunk into the larger coin – without the loss of any details outside the area impacted by the dies.

Jim had an example of this coin that was struck on an 1879 Peruvian Sol, but coins from many other South American and Central American countries were used as host coins by Guatemala.

The Club's Monthly Auction:

Jim Sproull, assisted by Jim Mullaney, conducted the monthly club auction.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Mullaney, Secretary

Gold

A 2008 $5.00 Gold Buffalo gold piece graded MS -69

About three months ago as this is being written the writer walked into one the two local coin stores in Martinez, Georgia to hand in the latest SJ CSRA CC newsletter and the dealer wished to share an unusual gold coin with me and it turned out to be one of the tiny gold coins the U.S. Mint struck in 2008, The coin is somewhat scarce today despite a fairly de cent mintage but unlike the $50 gold buffalo which h has been produced every year since 2006, the tiny coin shown directly above was struck only in 2008, so it is somehow much scarcer than the $50 version.

For those unfamiliar with these gold coins, neither the $5.00 Buffalo or $50 Buffalo gold coins are actually priced at their title values. Each coin is sold based on the value of gold inside them when one acquired the coin. If the writer acquired the little Buffalo coin w hen it was first produced and only in 2008, it would have cost him far less than it sells for today.

Years ago the five-cent coin used to be called either the Indian head or Buffalo nickel but like some of our baseball and football teams which once had American Indian names we now know that they were misnamed because our early visitors from Europe thought the natives they saw were Indians.

This little gold coin shown above is somewhat scarce today.

An 2006 Buffalo Gold $50,00 piece

Unlike the tiny gold so-called $5.00 Buffalo piece and the not shown $10.00 and $25,00 gold Buffalo pieces which were only struck in 2008, the Buffalo $50 cent piece was first struck in 2006 and continues to be produced today with very few of these large coins having circulated because they are used to buy things. The coin above represents the very first year of the Buffalo Gold type's existence and was struck in 24 Karat bullion which continues to this day. The writer finds it a handsome coin.

The Buffalo nickel was originally created by James Earle Fraser back in 1913 and was stuck thru 1938. The obverse shows the facial combinations of three different Indian chiefs as they were called by the White Man back then. The Buffalo was called Black Diamond. It was an extremely popular coin with Americans then as it is in gold today.

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